

**Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, January 6, 1805, from
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The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
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Ford.**

TO JOHN TAYLOR J. MSS.

Washington, Jan. 6, 1805.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of Dec. 26th has been duly received, and was received as a proof of your friendly partialities to me, of which I have so often had reason to be sensible. My opinion originally was that the President of the U. S. should have been elected for 7. years, & forever ineligible afterwards. I have since become sensible that 7. years is too long to be irremovable, and that there should be a peaceable way of withdrawing a man in midway who is doing wrong. The service for 8. years with a power to remove at the end of the first four, comes nearly to my principle as corrected by experience. And it is in adherence to that that I determined to withdraw at the end of my second term. The danger is that the indulgence & attachments of the people will keep a man in the chair after he becomes a dotard, that reelection through life shall become habitual, & election for life follow that. Genl. Washington set the example of voluntary retirement after 8. years. I shall follow it, and a few more precedents will oppose the obstacle of habit to anyone after a while who shall endeavor to extend his term. Perhaps it may beget a disposition to establish it by an amendment of the constitution. I believe I am doing right, therefore, in pursuing my principle. I had determined to declare my intention, but I have consented to be silent on the opinion of friends, who think it best not to put a continuance out of my power in defiance of all circumstances. There is, however, but one circumstance which could engage my

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acquiescence in another election, to wit, such a division about a successor as might bring in a Monarchist. But this circumstance is impossible. While, therefore, I shall make no formal declarations to the public of my purpose, I have freely let it be understood in private conversation. In this I am persuaded yourself & my friends generally will approve of my views: and should I at the end of a 2d term carry into retirement all the favor which the 1st has acquired, I shall feel the consolation of having done all the good in my power, and expect with more than composure the termination of a life no longer valuable to others or of importance to myself. Accept my affectionate salutations & assurances of great esteem & respect.